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QUETZACOTL

A South American tale

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HIGHLIGHTS

Saga of Vishnu



Saga of India



Unsolved Mystery



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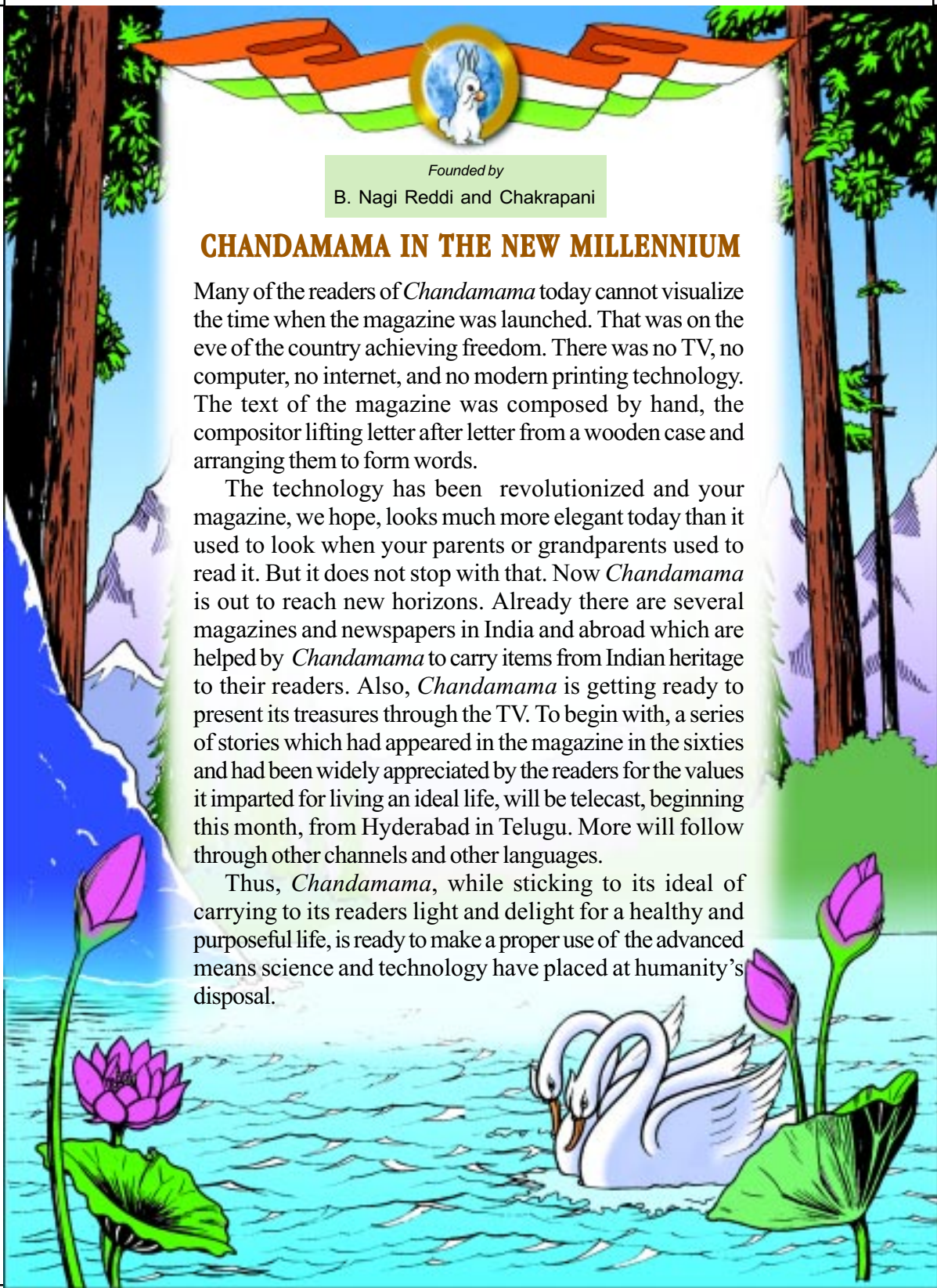
B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

CHANDAMAMA IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Many of the readers of *Chandamama* today cannot visualize the time when the magazine was launched. That was on the eve of the country achieving freedom. There was no TV, no computer, no internet, and no modern printing technology. The text of the magazine was composed by hand, the compositor lifting letter after letter from a wooden case and arranging them to form words.

The technology has been revolutionized and your magazine, we hope, looks much more elegant today than it used to look when your parents or grandparents used to read it. But it does not stop with that. Now *Chandamama* is out to reach new horizons. Already there are several magazines and newspapers in India and abroad which are helped by *Chandamama* to carry items from Indian heritage to their readers. Also, *Chandamama* is getting ready to present its treasures through the TV. To begin with, a series of stories which had appeared in the magazine in the sixties and had been widely appreciated by the readers for the values it imparted for living an ideal life, will be telecast, beginning this month, from Hyderabad in Telugu. More will follow through other channels and other languages.

Thus, *Chandamama*, while sticking to its ideal of carrying to its readers light and delight for a healthy and purposeful life, is ready to make a proper use of the advanced means science and technology have placed at humanity's disposal.



NEWS FLASH

Talking non-stop



Young participants in any oratorical contest would know how difficult it is to talk on a subject for three or five minutes. Of course, some of them might also feel they should have been given a few more minutes to present all arguments. In Chennai (former Madras) it was not a contest, but 27-year-old Kasinathan of Theni district in Tamilnadu ventured to speak on “The Social Status of

Women Today”. He began at 10 a.m. on

November 3 and concluded his speech 30 hours later at 4 p.m. the next day. He was aiming at an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. He beat the record of non-stop talk on a single subject standing in the name of Michael Moral (64) of New Zealand (24 hours). Quite a few VIPs, including a Judge of the Madras High Court, were present to listen to Kasinathan.

Garden for the blind

India gave a gift to the visually handicapped on New Year day. The National Botanical Research Institute opened a ‘blind garden’ in Lucknow—the first of its kind in the world. The visitors can not only smell the flowers and feel them, but read (in Braille) a description of the plants, their flowers and fruits. These details have been placed at shoulder level for their convenience. And if they pick up the telephone kept beside the plant (or a cluster of plants), a recording would tell them more about the plants. Those coming in wheelchairs can easily move around the garden.



The Taj—missing?

That's what people of Kachpura feared. Now, that place is on the other side of Yamuna, from where one can have an unhindered view of the world famous monument just 400 metres across the river. They had all assembled to see the Taj Mahal vanish into thin air, as claimed by a noted magician in his handbill distributed in that small town earlier. The show began in the afternoon of November 8, and each item presented by P.C. Sorcar, Jr., only made them wonder whether he would really pull off the much-publicized trick. And he did! As each one of the thousand pairs of eyes watched intently on that wonder in white marble, it vanished from their sight! It was then left to the magician's daughter, Maneka, to bring it back to their unbelieving eyes in a matter of two long minutes. The magician explained: "I was only applying the Adrisya rasa (disappearance) in the science of magic."



From Abacus to Anzan



This happened in Kyoto, Japan, on October 31. A group of contestants were given a problem: to divide 992.587318 by 5,647.723. There was no computer or calculator available to help them, not even an abacus. Still some of them were seen moving the beads of an imaginary abacus; some others bobbed in their seats, or rocked their seats while busy at some mental calculation. However, it was 13-year-old Hiroaki Tsuchiya who, within moments, shot out his arm. "Done!" He wrote out the answer on the board: 0.17575000013279688115015555826658. It was correct! He had used a method called Anzan. Japan came to know of the abacus around A.D. 1500. It was introduced by China. In abacus, the beads or counters have to be pushed back and forth along metal rods to do a sum. Expert abacus users found an easier method, instead of physically moving the beads. They just imagined they were operating an abacus! This came to be called Anzan. The day cannot be far when computers and calculators would become out- moded!

BORN THIS MONTH

Sarojini Naidu, who was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad, was a born poetess. She started writing poems when she was 11 years old. One day at school, young Sarojini could not concentrate in her mathematics lessons. And she started scribbling out a poem. She said it flowed out of her spontaneously.

Her father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya, was a great source of inspiration to Sarojini and her siblings. He, too, was a poet; he wrote poems in Urdu and Bengali. Mother Varada Sundari Devi, a good singer, wrote lyrics in Bengali.

Great men of letters of her period, like Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse, lauded Sarojini's poetry. Her first anthology, *The Golden Threshold*, was appreciated by critics.

The story goes that when she was thirteen, she fell very ill. The doctor advised her against even reading books. But Sarojini went on to write a 2,000-line play!

In spite of opposition in her family, she married Dr. Naidu, who belonged to another state, in 1898. Her life in Hyderabad gave her an opportunity to mix with Muslims. Later, when the issue of scrapping Urdu from the list of national languages came up, Sarojini fought forcefully against it. She would never hurt the sentiments of people.

Sarojini involved herself in the fight for women's rights. She believed that women ought to be educated, and that this would change the course of their lives. She insisted on their right to vote.

Before entering the political arena, she worked with Gandhiji in South Africa, against the racist regime there. It was Gopala Krishna Gokhale who introduced her into India's political scene. In 1919, she went to London as a member of the All India Home Rule League,



SAROJINI NAIDU

and spoke for the rights of women. Following the infamous massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, an outraged Sarojini gave up the award of *Kaiser-e-Hind* that had been conferred on her in 1908 in recognition of her social services.

She presided over the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1925. Her presidential address kindled the spirit of freedom in the people. During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, her humour and guts helped the volunteers face the situation bravely.

When Gandhiji was imprisoned in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune in 1942 during the Quit India Movement, Sarojini Naidu was also there. She cheered up everybody with her wit and humour. Robert Bernay in his book *'The Naked Fakir'* calls her 'the court jester of the Mahatma's little court'. Gandhiji called her the 'Bharat Kokila' or the 'Nightingale of India'.

She donned the mantle of the Governor of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) soon after India's independence, but with reluctance. She did not like being tied down; however, she discharged her duties with sincerity, diligence, and ease. She passed away on March 2, 1949.



New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

Malathi's Choice

Once again the determined Vikramaditya climbed the tree where the Vetala had taken the corpse. He patiently brought down the body, placed it on his shoulders again and climbed down with the heavy burden. Then he walked briskly towards the cremation ground.

The Vetala possessing the corpse addressed him saying, "O King, it is now midnight and this place is dark and frightening. Spirits and ghosts wander around here at this hour. Your life could be in great danger. Are you trying to solve a difficult problem or escape from an em-

barrassing situation that you are willing to undertake such a hard and impossible task? You don't seem to want to leave this cremation ground at all. Do keep this in mind. There are some people who feel that every small issue is a big problem and they get tense,



while others do not think enough about major issues and treat them very casually. This can lead to wrong decisions. I hope you are not one of those. I would like to warn you not to treat major decisions in life casually. There was this young girl called Malathi who threw away the good fortune that came her way in a most casual manner. Let

me tell you her story so that you can relax your mind and maybe you'll also learn something from it." The Vetala then began his narration.

In the jungles of Vindhyaachal in a hut lived a woodcutter with his daughter Malathi. Her mother had died when she was very young and her father had brought her up all by himself. Now that she had grown into a beautiful girl, he was anxious that he should find a suitable husband for her.

One day, the woodcutter heard that his sister, who lived in a village nearby, had taken ill. So he set off early the next day to call on her. He had to leave Malathi alone at home as their cow was expecting a calf.

After her father left, Malathi finished her chores. Then she washed her hair and went out into the garden. She walked around picking up flowers and singing in a sweet voice.

Suddenly dark clouds gathered and it threatened to rain. Continuing her singing, she sat down to string the flowers into a garland. She finished making the garland and was about to wear it in her hair when she heard a voice. "Even the nightingale has been silenced by your lovely song," said the voice. "How sweetly you sing!"

Malathi was startled and turned around towards the voice, when a young man stepped forward and said, "My name is Madhu Kumar. I am a lover of

music and I was enchanted by your sweet voice.”

Malathi did not know how she should react to these words. As she looked around in confusion, there was a sudden cloudburst. Malathi asked the young man to step into the verandah and said, “O dear, you’re all wet!”

Madhu Kumar came inside quickly. He looked around and was greatly impressed. “Your home looks lovely. Aren’t you afraid of living alone in the middle of this forest?”

“I was born and brought up here. My father lives with me, so why should I be afraid?” replied Malathi.

Just then a voice was heard: “Is anybody inside? May I come in? The rain shows no sign of stopping!”

Malathi opened the door to find a handsome young man on the verandah. She welcomed him, saying: “Do come in. You seem to have got drenched.”

The young man was surprised to see such a beautiful girl in the middle of the forest. For a moment he was speechless. But composing himself as he entered, he said: “My name is Sundardas. I’m on my way to my friend’s wedding and got caught in the rain.”

Pointing at Madhu Kumar on the cot, Malathi said: “He is Madhu Kumar. He too was caught in the rain.”

Just then another voice said: “I’m sorry for entering without permission, but the storm is very severe and I’m com-

pletely drenched.”

Before Malathi could answer him, the third man who had come in said: “My name is Ravishankar. I’m on my way to town on business, and was caught in the rain. Heaven knows when there’ll be a let up!”



After a while there was a let up and the three men left one after the other. Madhu Kumar was the first to leave and Malathi went up to the door to see him off. He said to her quietly: “Your sweet voice has enchanted me and I’ve fallen in love with you. I shall send my brother to your father to propose a marriage between us.”

Sundardas spoke to Malathi secretly before he left: “You’re so beautiful. In fact, you make a good match for a handsome man like me. I never thought I would ever meet such a person. I shall ask my parents to come and meet your father tomorrow and propose marriage between us.”

Ravishankar also confessed that he had fallen in love with her and told Malathi that he was a wealthy trader. “It’ll be so pleasant to come here to relax after the strain and stress of business. I shall ask my mother to call on your father tomorrow with a proposal.”

When her father returned, Malathi asked him: “How’s aunty?”

Her father said: “She isn’t too well. I’m afraid she may not live very long. She’s worried that she may not live long enough to see her son Ramapati married.”

“Why should she grieve about such a matter? Why doesn’t she get him married to a girl of her choice?” asked Malathi.

“My sister has certainly been unwise

about her son’s marriage,” said the woodcutter. “First, she thought she might be able to find a bride from a rich family, but her dreams did not materialise. I wanted to suggest that she should make you her daughter-in-law, but we’re not rich like her. But she has now raised the subject and says if your wedding with Ramapati takes place, she can die peacefully. I’ve also agreed. Now Ramapati wants to know if you are willing to marry him.”

Malathi smiled: “Father, after you left in the morning, there was a heavy downpour in which three young men got caught. They came into our hut to escape from

the rain. The first one is a lover of music, the second one is very handsome, and the third one is a wealthy trader. Each one of them proposed to me before he left, saying they will send their people to talk to you about it.”

“Really?” said her father. “All three of them must surely be rich. Forget your cousin Ramapati. Tell me if you’ll accept any one of the three.”



“Father, I shall marry only Ramapati,” said Malathi without any hesitation.

The Vetala stopped his narration there and said: “O King, it is clear that Malathi made a foolish decision. Her three suitors were rich and accomplished young men. She should have chosen one of them as her husband. She would have then led a life of comfort and luxury. Instead, she chose an illiterate farmer like Ramapati as her groom. Choosing a life partner is a serious matter, because it affects one’s future. But Malathi treated the whole thing so casually and made up her mind without giving a thought to the consequences. I think she spoilt her future and did not take advantage of the fortune that came her way. Tell me if my judgement is right. If you know the answer and yet keep quiet, your head will explode into tiny pieces.”

Vikramaditya said: “What can be a serious and complex issue or how a

simple and easy decision could be made depends on the personality and emotional attitudes of the person facing the problem. According to their experience they take the best decision possible. Malathi did not do anything wrong by deciding to marry her cousin because she felt it was the most sensible and natural thing to do. Each of the three suitors, who desired to marry her after a very brief acquaintance, took it for granted that she would only be too happy to marry him. They did not feel it necessary to ascertain her wish. Ramapati was the only one who asked for her opinion. Those who did not feel it necessary to ask for her opinion before marriage were unlikely to change their attitude later. So your statement that Malathi made a foolish decision and ruined her future is not correct or valid.”

The Vetala, having successfully got King Vikramaditya to break his silence, flew off to the ancient tree with the corpse.



Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation – its glorious quest for Truth through the ages



13. Path to the ultimate goal



“Grandpa, the story of Dhruva was inspiring, indeed. Does it mean that prayers are always granted even when it demands of God himself to appear before us? I’m willing to pray, provided you teach me how to go about it!” said Sandip, during their next session with Professor Devnath.

Grandpa laughed. “My boy, your question can be answered only by one who had realised God.”

“I didn’t understand you, Grandpa. Is there any difference between one who has a knowledge of God and one who has realised God?” asked Sandip.

“There are any number of people

who have some knowledge of God. But there are not many who have realised God. I was born in a village. Before I came to the town for my study, I had some knowledge of chocolate—that it was made of a certain fruit, it had a certain darkish colour, it tasted sweet, and that it was elegantly packed. In the town I had a chance to eat the stuff. That was ‘realising’ chocolate. Well, as intelligent children that you are, this simile can, I hope, give you an idea, in a small way, between a knowledge of God and the realisation of God.”

Grandpa paused for a while and then resumed: “Coming back to your

question, Sandip, it is only when you seek Him most ardently, when you think and feel that nothing else on the earth—neither power nor wealth nor fame—can satisfy you, that there is a chance of His revealing Himself to you. Dhruva, in his previous life, had been a pious man's son and, even as a boy, was deeply interested in God. Once he befriended a prince of his age who lived amidst power and plenty. The life-style of the prince fascinated Dhruva and he wondered how fortunate it was to be a prince. This momentary desire of his was granted. He was born a prince only to realize how elusive happiness was!"

"Did Dhruva know of his earlier life as a devotee?" asked Chameli.

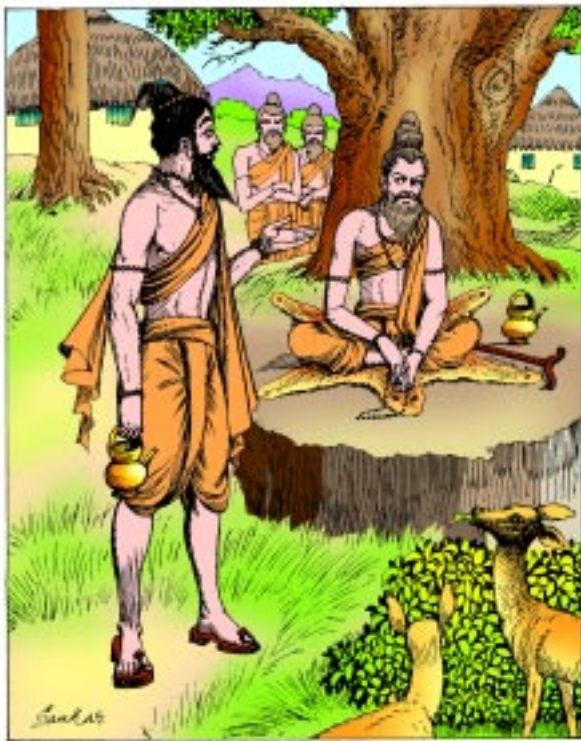
"No. But he learnt about it by and by. When he walked through the forest in the company of a sage, he felt a bit proud of his achievement. After all, he had known and realised God at a young age, whereas so many seekers older than he had sought Him for years but in vain. Suddenly, the sage asked Dhruva, pointing his finger at a small earthen heap: 'Do you know what the heap under that tree is?' Dhruva did not know. Said the sage: 'Well, that is where you sat for years meditating on God and left your body—not once but several times. The heap is made of your buried skeletons.' Dhruva was stunned. His pride disappeared. This may be a story. But it conveys the truth that the



process of realizing God, the supreme goal of life, can be a continuous process, spread over many lives."

The professor did not know that his daughter-in-law, Jayashree, was standing behind him. He heard her murmur: "Isn't it rather surprising that pride continues in man even after he had realised God?"

"Well, man is a very complex creature. Don't you find in the life of an ordinary or average man qualities that are opposed to one another? We find the qualities of both kindness and harshness in the same man. We also see a fool suddenly acting wisely, and someone known for his wisdom conducting himself like a fool. On a different plane, someone who had



advanced far along the spiritual path may act like an ordinary fellow at times. One may realize God only in one's inner being, that is to say one's soul, while one's mind and emotions remain as they were."

"For example, Grandpa?" demanded Chameli.

"Have you heard the names of the great sages, Vasishtha and Viswamitra? While Vasishtha was a seer par excellence, one who had realized God, Viswamitra was a king who renounced his throne to become a seer, like the former. He was envious of Vasishtha and was anxious to be recognised as a seer equal in status to Vasishtha. But ambition to excel somebody does not go well with spiritual pursuit. That's why

Viswamitra found it hard to become as great as Vasishtha. But he demanded that Vasishtha acknowledged his status as a Maharishi or great seer. Vasishtha, however, did not oblige him. Instead of looking into his own weaknesses, Viswamitra began to grow more and more angry with Vasishtha. Viswamitra was insistent that Vasishtha should recognise his greatness, but Vasishtha always politely avoided doing so.

"The angry Viswamitra did everything he could to humiliate Vasishtha. He caused the death of his sons. Even then Vasishtha remained calm and unyielding.

"It was a dark night when, seated in his hermitage all alone, Viswamitra reflected on the situation. If other sages did not give him the credit of being a great seer, it was because of Vasishtha. In other words, Vasishtha was the greatest obstacle to his achieving the status he desired. So deep was his anguish that Viswamitra decided to do away with this obstacle.

"He picked up a dagger—a relic from his days as a ruler. Slowly he moved towards the hut of Vasishtha. His grip firm on the handle of his dagger, he pressed his ear on the door of the hut to know if all was quiet inside.

"He heard the voice of Vasishtha's wife, Arundhati, pleading with her husband to acknowledge Viswamitra's greatness. 'What use refusing the man

who had sacrificed his kingdom for a status he yearns to enjoy?" she asked.

"I want him to sacrifice something much greater than the kingdom. I'm waiting for the day when he would sacrifice what is deeply rooted within him—his ego," answered the great seer.

"But one word from you may satisfy his vanity. He'll stop hating you and concentrate on his spiritual goal," said Arundhati.

"No. He'll feel so much flattered that he'll stop making any progress towards his goal. He'll rest satisfied. He's capable of going very far in his pursuit. I want him to really become a great seer, instead of letting him think that he was a great seer, a status which he is yet to achieve."

"The dagger fell off Viswamitra's hand. Then and there he realized the greatness of Vasishtha who had nothing

but goodwill even for his greatest enemy. He cried and fell at Vasishtha's feet. Thereafter, he scaled far higher spiritual heights as foreseen by Vasishtha."

Grandpa said in conclusion: "So, you see, many elements go to make the consciousness of a man. It is not that Viswamitra had made no spiritual progress when he was trying to destroy Vasishtha. But something in him had not been touched by the spiritual light. That part had remained rough and unrefined. But at the right moment his spiritual quality conquered his ordinary human emotions and made him a greater sage."

"What a pity! We'll never understand man," observed Sandip.

"You'll understand man only if you understand yourself," said Professor Devnath and added: "Let's call it a day."

-Visvvasu

[To continue]



Stories from Other Lands (South America)

Quetzacoatl

Thousands of years ago, there was a king called The Serpent of the Snow. He ruled over South America. He was a wise ruler and a good man, so the people loved him dearly. He was also a brave man and a great warrior. No enemy could ever invade his kingdom and get away with it. He fought fiercely and his inspiring example made his men fight equally bravely and his army was undefeatable.

A wicked man called Chilalman was

the king of a neighbouring country. He was as cowardly as The Serpent of the Snow was brave. One day, Chilalman invaded the northern part of the kingdom of The Serpent of the Snow. When The Serpent of the Snow took his army to fight him, he found Chilalman on a white horse waiting for him. The Serpent of the Snow was surprised. He knew Chilalman was a coward and preferred to direct his armies from behind.

This time, however, Chilalman challenged him: "My power is greater than yours, Serpent. Be prepared to die!" He then let off an arrow from his quiver. The Serpent quickly dodged the arrow. Chilalman was furious. It was the witch Uitznuac who had given him the quiver full of arrows that he wore. She had assured him that whoever those arrows were aimed at would fall dead. Chilalman aimed another arrow and then another one, till his quiver was empty. But The Serpent of the Snow managed to dodge every one of them.

Then The Serpent advanced on Chilalman's army and defeated him decidedly. After the battle, The Serpent ordered his men to pick up all the arrows that Chilalman had shot and burn them. When the flames were really high, a beautiful and colourful bird suddenly emerged. Its breast was a bright green and it had beautiful red feathers. Its eyes were a deep blue and its beak and tal-



ons were a bright gold. The Serpent of the Snow was so struck by the beauty of the bird that he bowed low before it. Watching him, all his men did the same. The bird then circled around and came to rest at the feet of The Serpent of the Snow.

The bird spoke: "Thank you for releasing me from the curse of the witch Uitznuac. Only you could have done so, for you are brave, noble, and good. Rule your land wisely and well. If ever you need help, you can call me. I'll come to you from my home in the Palace of the White Gold in the mountains over there."

The bird then flew away. But the kingdom of The Serpent of the Snow prospered even more after that and the people believed that the bird had brought them good fortune. They called the bird Quetzacoatl, built temples for him, and worshipped him all over the land.

The Serpent of the Snow had twin sons and he decreed that on his death the kingdom should be divided into two and Cintoetl should rule the land to the South and Tollan the land to the North. Came the sad day when The Serpent died and his sons became the rulers of the divided kingdom.

Cintoetl was a brave and wise ruler, but his twin was selfish and foolish. He loved flattery and all his advisers were as wicked and foolish as he was. Soon the people in his part of the kingdom grew very unhappy but were unable to Chandamama

do anything about it. Quetzacoatl also was very sad at their plight and would fly around miserably, trying to help wherever he could.

One day when Tollan was out hunting, he spied Quetzacoatl sitting glumly on a tree. He was jealous of the bird as everyone loved it. So he crept up from behind and caught the bird. He caged it in his palace and proudly showed it off



to everyone. Even Tollan's friends were horrified at what he had done, but when they saw how proud he was, they too mocked the bird and praised Tollan for his clever deed.

Tollan felt really great and said: "If I've captured Quetzacoatl, then I must be greater than him. So people should raze to the ground all the temples they have built for him and build temples for me instead." So foolish was the man that he actually had this terrible thing done.

Cintoetl, however, did not approve of his brother's deeds at all and asked



palace. Now you must see that I'm greater than you and that stupid bird you worship."

All the courtiers took their lead from Tollan and started mocking Cintoetl. However, one young maiden felt pity for him. She told Tollan: "Sire, this man is your

brother and he's in pain. You must be merciful. Allow me to tend his wounds."

brother and he's in pain. You must be merciful. Allow me to tend his wounds."

Tollan said: "Let no one say that I'm not merciful. Tend him how you will, but he cannot leave the cage. Nurse him and when he is well, I'll have him executed."

The battle was fierce and went on all night. Tollan asked his soldiers to dip their arrows in burning tar and shoot them at Cintoetl's army. The arrows found their mark and badly burned Cintoetl's men and they ran away from the field. As Tollan's men gave a chase, one of them saw that Cintoetl was burned black and was bleeding from a terrible wound. He went and told Tollan, who took him back to his palace and put him in a cage on the right side of his throne. Quetzacoatl was in a cage on the left side of the throne while Tollan sat grandly on his throne in the middle. When Cintoetl regained consciousness, he was horrified to find himself in a cage.

So the maiden, whose name was Cochtocan, nursed him and slowly Cintoetl got better till he regained his handsome form and good health. Cochtocan fell in love with the hapless king. He, too, grew to love the kind and lovely girl.

One day, she told him: "I cannot keep the fact that you're completely well from Tollan any more. When I tell him you are well, he'll kill you." And she burst into sobs.

"So brother!" sneered Tollan. "You are conscious now. Welcome to my

"Then you must help me escape," said Cintoetl.

"How?" asked Cochtocan. "He keeps the keys of the cage tied to his wrist and gives it to no one."

“This is what we’ll do,” said Cintoetl and told her about his plan.

The next day the girl went to Tollan and told him that Cintoetl was now completely well. She also asked for a favour from Tollan.

“Anything you want,” he said.

“Then let me carry Quetzacoetl on my wrist to watch the execution.”

Tollan laughed aloud and gave his permission. The next day the court gathered in the yard outside the throne room. Tollan gave a word of command and Cintoetl was brought out of the cage.

“Now you will see how powerful I am, brother,” said Tollan. “All these archers are expert marksmen and will never miss their target. But only one of them has the order to kill you. Call out a number and that archer alone will shoot. If he has the order, you will die or he will miss.”

“What if I don’t?” asked Cintoetl.

“Then Quetzacoatl will slowly die,” said Tollan.

After that Cintoetl was blindfolded and placed against the wall. Cintoetl called “Seven”. The archer with that number stood forward and aimed the arrow. It whizzed past his ear and hit the wall. The crowd gasped and there was absolute silence as they waited to see what would happen next. But before Cintoetl could call out another number, Cochtocan let Quetzacoatl
Chandamama

loose. The bird flew swiftly towards Tollan and struck at his eyes. Tollan screamed as blood spurted like a fountain from his eyes and streamed down his clothes. In the confusion that followed, no one paid any attention to Cochtocan. She quickly undid Cintoetl’s blindfold and both of them ran out of the yard to where two horses were waiting for them. They rode off to Cintoetl’s palace. Nobody followed them. Nobody could, because Cochtocan had removed the shoes from all the other horses in the palace.

Soon they were out of Tollan’s country and Quetzacoatl flew with them all the way. They were welcomed joyfully by the people in Cintoetl’s kingdom. Within a short time Cintoetl collected an army and marched against Tollan. This time Tollan was unable to command as he could not see and there was hardly any fight.

Cintoetl came back victorious. He and Cochtocan were married soon after.



REWARDS FOR EVERYBODY

There was once a king who was always looking for opportunities to reward people for their remarks or actions even if they were silly. One day, he was taking a stroll in the royal garden along with his entourage and in the company of his ministers. From nowhere flew down a strange bird and perched itself on the branch of a tree in front of the king.

“Does anyone know its name?” queried the king.

Everybody looked at each other, but nobody came out with an answer. An attendant in the entourage ventured to suggest a name. “It could be the No-name bird, your majesty,” he said.

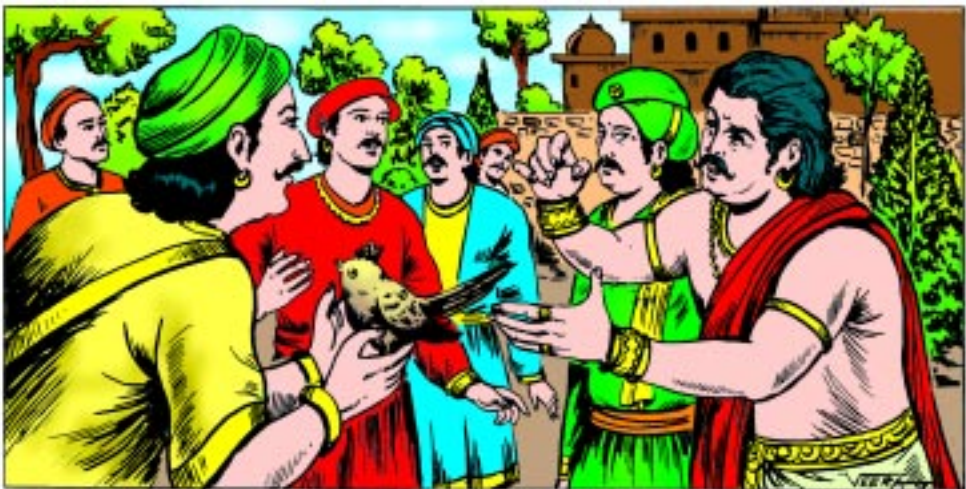
“Wonderful!” said the king, apparently very pleased with the answer. He took off one of his bangles and gave it to the attendant. “Keep it!”

The king now went near the bird, and asked it to spell out its name. The bird did not respond even with a cry. “Probably it can’t understand our language, your majesty,” another attendant offered an explanation.

“Ah! You’re very right!” exclaimed the king, and smilingly handed a bangle he had on the other hand.

One of the ministers was not very happy with the way the king was handing out rewards. He shooed the bird away. “We don’t know what bird it is; and it doesn’t understand what we’re saying. That’s why I shooed it away, your majesty,” said the minister apologetically.

“What you say is very true; and you did the right thing,” remarked the king, as he took off his pearl necklace and offered it to the minister.



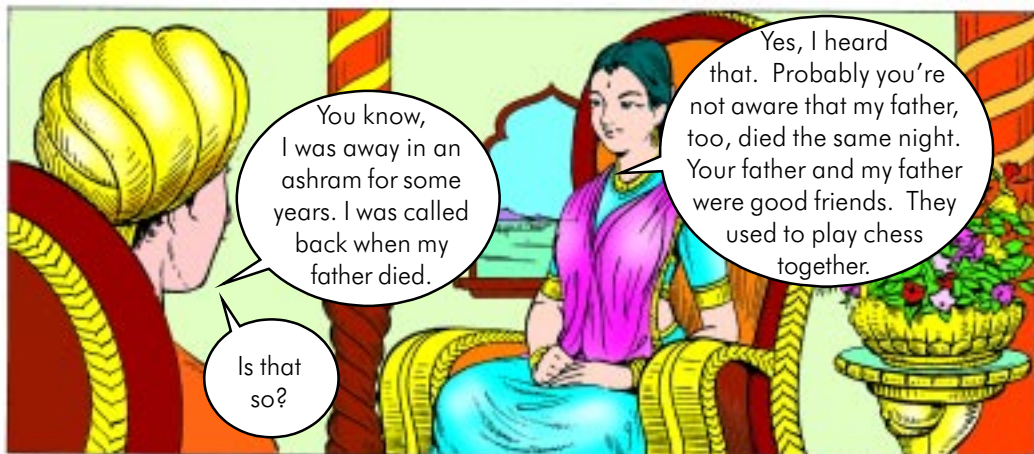
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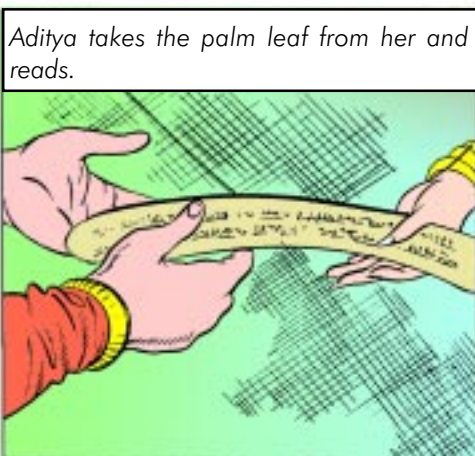
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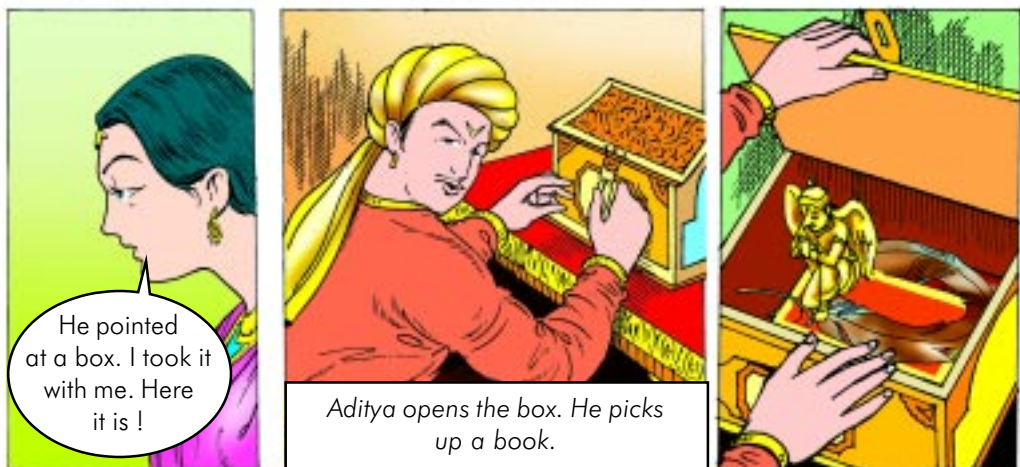
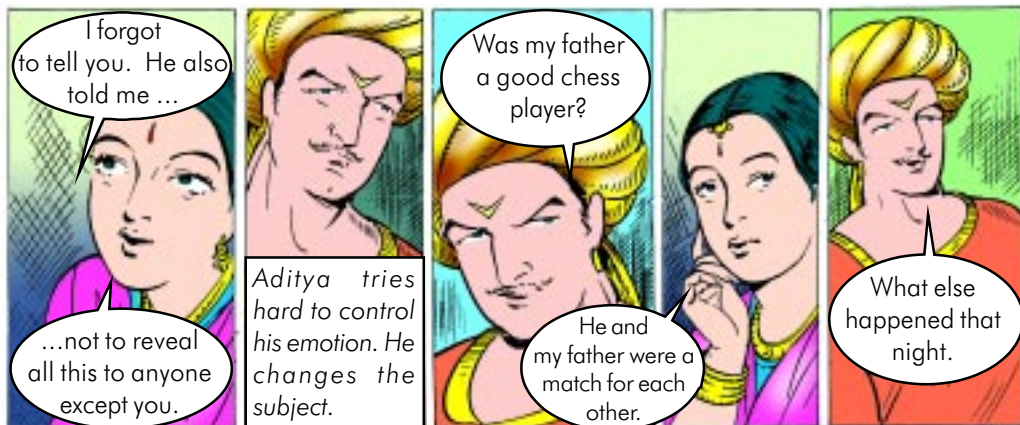
ART: PAANI

Chandrapuri has enjoyed peace and tranquillity for a long time. After the sudden demise of his able minister, King Mahendradeva sends for his son, Aditya, and makes him a courtier. The army commander, Narendradeva, who is the Queen's brother, failed to round up the dacoits harassing the people. The king entrusts the job to Aditya. He catches them by a ruse. As they are led to prison, he recognises one of them. Ram Singh.









India in the 20th century

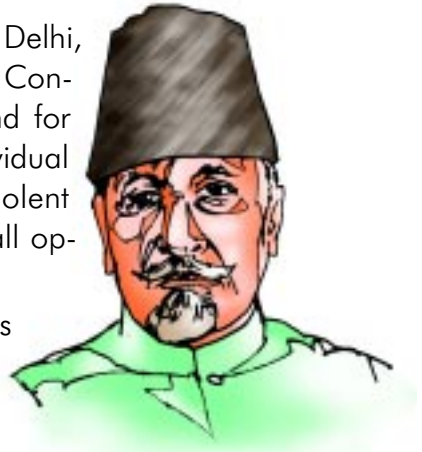
FROM SELF-GOVERNMENT TO SOVEREIGN REPUBLIC — 1923-1950

In May 1923, the police arrested some Congressmen who took out a procession in Nagpur to protest the ban on carrying of the tricolour in processions. July 18 was observed as Flag Day all over the country. The government later withdrew the ban.

At a special session of the Congress in Delhi, with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad presiding, Congressmen were given the freedom to stand for elections to Legislative Councils in their individual capacity. It was also decided that non-violent *satyagraha* was the only method to resist all oppressive measures of the government.

By 1924, a feeling arose that there was no coordination among the various parties and groups in carrying out the fight for freedom. Gandhiji convened a meeting with the leaders of the Swaraj Party, a splinter group from the Congress, at which the importance of working in cooperation was stressed. It was decided to suspend the Non-cooperation movement.

Later, presiding over the Belgaum session of the Congress, Gandhiji characterised the Non-cooperation movement and the Civil Disobedience movement as two branches of a 'Kalpa-vriksha' which could be expected to bring results. It was decided to promote Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition, and abolition of untouchability.



Maulana Azad

Complete freedom, nothing less



Sarojini Naidu

At the 40th session of the Congress on December 26, 1925, the President Mrs. Sarojini Naidu told Congressmen

that fear and doubts had no place in their fight for freedom; it would amount to self-deception. She exhorted the people to go forward to achieve the goal of freedom.

As an adjunct to the annual Congress session in 1926, an all-India College Students Conference was held, at which it was decided to boycott all government-run educational institutions. Also, to start schools and colleges for those who had left their institutions to take part in the Non-cooperation movement.

The Congress session in Madras in 1927 accepted the resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru that India would not rest till complete freedom was granted. This was the first time that such a demand was being made through an official

resolution. The session also appealed to the people to boycott the Simon Commission, which was touring India to study the progress of implementation of the Minto-Morley reforms.

An all-party meet in Delhi in 1928 decided that India should have a constitution on the basis of a free, responsible government. It appointed a committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draft the constitution. The

draft presented at the next meeting was accepted by all parties except the Muslim League, whose President M.A. Jinnah

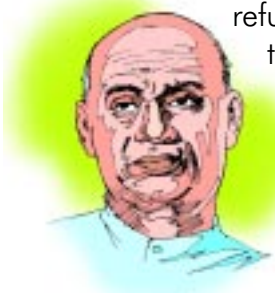
demanding that some constituencies be reserved for the Muslims. The demand was rejected. Some Congressmen objected to the recommendation that India should be satisfied with a dominion status. When elder leaders like Gandhiji accepted the suggestion, the younger members like Jawaharlal



Jinnah

Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose demanded nothing less than absolute freedom.

The liberation struggle took a new dimension in 1928 when the farmers of Bardoli, in Gujarat, led by Vallabhbhai Patel refused to pay the taxes. They



Vallabhbhai Patel

went to the extent of denying food and transport to the tax collectors.

The government confiscated their movable properties and attached their farm lands. The agitation was withdrawn when the government promised a revision of the tax structure.

The 44th session of the Indian National Congress on December 31, 1929 at Lahore, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, "declared" India as independent and hoisted the tricolour at a midnight ceremony. He said what the country wanted was freedom from British imperialism and separation from the empire. It was decided to observe January 26 as Independence Day.

Elsewhere in the world ...



- Television was born on October 2, 1925 when John Logie Baird succeeded in reproducing moving images on a screen kept at a distance.



- Charles Lindbergh created aviation history by flying solo and non-stop (33-1/2 hours) from Long Island, New York, to Paris, 3,600 miles away, in the single-engined *Spirit of St. Louis* on May 21, 1927.

Start of civil disobedience

The Congress Working Committee meeting at Sabarmati in February 1930 decided to launch the Civil Disobedience movement and handed the leadership to Gandhiji, whose intention to defy



the Salt Law was approved. On March 12, he and 78 followers started on foot from Sabarmati and proceeded to Dandi, 200 miles away. After 24 days, they reached Dandi where, on April 6, he and his followers scooped salt from the sea-bed and thus broke the pernicious law imposing tax on what the sea was giving free.

A month later, he was arrested.

The Congress Party boycotted the First Round Table Conference held in London on November 12. Jinnah, representing the Muslim League, wanted reservation of one-third number of seats for Muslims in all legislative bodies. The Hindu Mahasabha objected to this demand.

Following an agreement between Gandhiji and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, the Civil Disobedience movement was withdrawn. The government promised to stop all repressive measures.

Gandhiji represented the Congress at the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. The government stated that self-government could be granted only after social reforms were implemented. Gandhiji



argued that social reforms could wait till political reforms were introduced.

The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, in utter disregard of the Gandhi-Irwin pact, issued four ordinances in January 1932, which practically prevented any agitation, protest or demonstration. The Congress declared its intention to start the Civil Disobedience movement once again. The Party was declared an unlawful body. Nearly 400 Congressmen were arrested from different parts of the country.



- The Indian physicist C.V.Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930 for what has been called the 'Raman Effect'. He was the first person in the whole of Asia to win this prestigious award.

Elsewhere in the world ...

- Mickey Mouse appeared on the silver screen in a cartoon talkie in New York in September 1928. Two silent movies produced earlier did not attract distributors!



- In the same year, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin, which was successfully tried for healing wounds and injuries.



Alexander Fleming

- The original manuscript of *Alice in Wonderland* was sold for 15,400 dollars in 1928.

First ministries in provinces

In May 1933, Gandhiji went on a hunger strike in the jail. It lasted 21 days. He announced suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement for a second time. After his release, he announced that he would now direct his efforts towards the upliftment of people belonging to the low castes whom he called Harijans.



Jayaprakash
Narayan

At the Patna session of the Congress in May 1934, some members who described themselves as socialists held a separate meeting and formed the Congress Socialist Party. Its demands included complete freedom for India, formation of a Constituent Assembly, and establishment of a socialist form of society. Jayaprakash Narayan was chosen President.

When the Congress held its 48th session in Bombay in October, Gandhiji announced his resignation from the Party. In the November elections to the Central Legislative Council, the Congress won a

majority.

Jawaharlal Nehru, presiding over the 1936 session of the Congress in Lucknow, suggested that membership in the party should be thrown open to labour unions and farmers' associations. The predominant presence of left-wing members was evident at the session. Young socialist thinkers like Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyuth Patwardhan were included in the Working Committee.

An all India Students Federation was founded to encourage and involve students in the struggle for freedom.

The Congress formed ministries in some of the provinces where it won a majority of seats in the elections held in 1937. Out of a



Vijayalakshmi Pandit

total 1,585 seats, 715 went to the Congress, while the Muslim League won 123 seats. In the United Provinces, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister,

Vijayalakshmi Pandit, became the first woman cabinet minister, holding the Health portfolio.

Gandhiji presided over a conference at Wardha in October when he introduced a new education scheme. Called Basic Education, it laid emphasis on vocational education and a close study of India's heritage. The first Basic School came up in Wardha itself.

The nationalist movement had by now spread to the 500 odd princely states as well, where Congressmen had formed small groups. The rulers of some states, however, did not approve of such activities because they owed allegiance to the British Government. States like Mysore and Travancore had reacted violently against the activities of Congressmen. The Haripura session of the Congress (1938) expressed anxiety over the oppression facing Congressmen in the states. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted the Party to extend full support to the state units.

- January 8, 1933 was observed as Temple Entry Day all over India, as exhorted by the Congress.

Elsewhere in the world ...



- The German-made airship Zeppelin made a round the world journey in 21 days. (1929)
 - U.S. astronomer Clyde Tombaugh discovered the existence of a ninth planet, Pluto. (1930)
 - Don Bradman scored 452 not out in one innings, creating a world record. He batted for New South Wales against Queensland for 415 minutes, hitting 49 boundaries. (1930)
- The song "Happy Birthday to you" was composed by Clayton F. Sammy. (1924)
 - Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel. (1926)

Tussle for leadership in Congress

For the first time in the history of Congress, there was a tussle for the Presidentship.

The Rightists led by Gandhiji nominated Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Subhas Chandra Bose, whose candidature



Subhas
Chandra Bose

was supported by the Leftwingers, was elected with a clear majority. Gandhiji took this as his personal defeat.

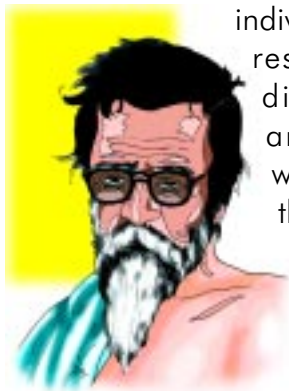
The 52nd session was held in Tripura in March 1939. A resolution reposing confidence in Gandhiji and suggesting that he be given a hand in appointing the members of the Working Committee was passed. This was taken by Bose's supporters as expressing want of confidence in the President. When he realised that he would not be able to function freely, Bose resigned and formed the Forward Bloc. He was expelled from the Congress.

On the outbreak of the Second World War in September, the Viceroy suspended all provincial governments, and called upon the people to support Britain in the War. The Congress Working Committee stated that the people would support Britain only if the government clarified how the War would affect the people. India should be declared independent immediately, and the interests of the minorities be safeguarded.

One year into the War, the Congress continued its demand for the immediate formation of an interim government. If this was not coming through, the alternative was civil disobedience. However, both Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru took the stand that when Britain was at war, the people should not start civil disobedience.

The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, assured the Congress that once the War was over, a representative assembly would be formed to decide on a constitution for India.

The Congress Committee meeting in Bombay, in September, accepted Gandhiji's suggestion that instead of any mass agitation,



Vinoba Bhave

individuals might resort to civil disobedience and that he would choose the persons to offer *satyagraha*. He chose Vinoba Bhave as the first

satyagrahi. Vinobaji started on a *padayatra* from Panvar, near Wardha. On the fourth day of the march, he was taken into custody. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested even before he could offer *satyagraha*. Soon leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were also arrested.

- The seat of government was shifted to the newly built city of New Delhi in 1931.
- India's first pictorial stamps (6 in number) on New Delhi were released to mark the inauguration of the new capital.

Elsewhere in the world ...

- Though cartoons and strip comics had been appearing in newspapers off and on, a full book of comics was published for the first time in 1934. The 68-page book was titled '*Famous Funnies*'.



- The world's longest (4,200 ft) suspension bridge, *Golden Gate Bridge*, in San Francisco, was opened for traffic in 1937.
- Burma (now called Myanmar) was separated from India. (1937)
- Bernard Faustess established the first ever Blood Bank (an expression coined by him) in USA. (1937)

Support to India's freedom struggle

Subhas Chandra Bose, who was under house arrest in Calcutta, escaped on January 17, 1941. Travelling incognito to Peshawar, Kabul, and Moscow, he reached Berlin, where he established the Free India Center. Its military wing was called the India Legion. Bose started broadcasts from Azad Hind Radio.

Word had spread about the legitimacy of India's demand for independence and the unique way the country was carrying on its fight through non-violent methods. After a visit to India in 1942, the President of the Chinese Republic, Chiang Kai-shek, appealed to Britain to transfer power to the people. The U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, in his cable to the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, said an interim government should be formed in India after granting it at least a dominion status. In the British Parliament itself, a large majority of the members wanted a national government set up at the earliest.

The Congress session in Bombay ratified the resolution of the Working Committee to ask Britain to leave India immediately,

and to start a mass agitation, entrusting the leadership once again to Gandhiji. On August 9, he made the clarion call 'Quit India', which soon became a popular slogan to be heard from the lengths and breadths of the country. Almost all the leaders were arrested overnight. There was widespread violence.

From the jail, Gandhiji continued his pleadings with the Viceroy. On getting no favourable response from him, Gandhiji announced a 21-day fast in February 1943. His condition deteriorated day by day. Some prominent persons not belonging to any political party appealed to the government to release Gandhiji and other leaders. A few Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned.

Undertaking hazardous journeys on board submarine and by air, Subhas Chandra Bose reached Japan where Prime Minister



'Netaji' Bose

Tojo promised all help to India's struggle to gain independence. Meanwhile, Rash

Behari Bose moved the India Independence League from the Thai capital Bangkok to Singapore. On his arrival there on July 2, Subhas Chandra Bose was given a guard of honour by the Indian National Army. From then on, he came to be called 'Netaji'. He gave out the call '*Chalo Dilli*'. On October 21, he announced the formation of the Azad Hind government in Singapore.

- The first National Park was established on Delhi-Nainital road in 1935. The name, Hailey National Park, was changed to Corbett National Park, in 1957.



K.M. Munshi

- Kulapati K.M. Munshi founded the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. (1938)

Elsewhere in the world ...

- Indians in countries like Thailand, Malaya, and Japan formed India Independence League units and appealed to Subhas Chandra Bose to take up the leadership. (1942)



- The two main perpetrators of the Second World War met with violent end. Adolf Hitler, the Nazi ruler of Germany, committed suicide, while Mussolini, the Generalissimo of Italy, was assassinated. On May 7, 1945 Germany surrendered. Japan was still holding on, but the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on August 6 and 9, resulting in vast destruction of human lives and property, brought that country to its knees. Japan surrendered on August 14.

Plan for transfer of power

The British government had all along argued that the Muslim League was not in favour of a national government. C. Rajagopalachari met some of the Muslim leaders and put forth what



C. Rajagopalachari

came to be called the C.R. Formula. The Muslim League should help form an interim government, and after the War, the Muslim majority areas would be demarcated and have a separate government. The League President Jinnah did not accept the formula. He wanted formation of 'Pakistan' first and then independence. Gandhiji met Jinnah in September 1944, but their talks did not make any headway. On behalf of the

Congressmen, Bhulabhai Desai suggested formation of an interim government with equal representation to the Congress and the Muslim League.

Meanwhile, the seat of the Azad Hind government was shifted from Singapore to Rangoon, capital of Burma. The Indian National Army soon reached the frontiers of India and raised the Indian tricolour at Moireng in Manipur. Netaji made a broadcast from Rangoon on June 6, 1944 in which he described Gandhiji as the Father of the Nation.

The new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, after consultations in England in 1945, announced a scheme for transfer of power. It was described as purely an interim measure which would not be an impediment to the drafting of a constitution later. The Congress and the Muslim League would have equal representation in the Executive Council, in which only the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would be Englishmen. An all-party meeting was convened in Simla, where Jinnah asserted that other than the formation of Pakistan, the League would not accept any

proposal. The only outcome of the meet was that all those imprisoned following the Quit India movement were released.

A meeting of the Provincial Governors recommended holding of general elections. The Viceroy agreed. The Congress decided to take part in the elections, but disagreed with all other suggestions.



Sardar Udham Singh

- The Jallianwalah Bagh massacre was avenged when a Sikh called Sardar Udham Singh shot dead the former Punjab Governor Michael O' Dwyer, in a London theatre in 1940. Udham Singh was one of those injured when the army had fired upon a gathering of people 21 years earlier.

Elsewhere in the world ...

- The first meeting of the United Nations was held in London on January 10, 1946. Representatives from 51 countries were present. It was decided to have the permanent seat of the U.N. in New York.
- A company in the U.S.A. invented the electric blanket in 1946.
- The first supersonic flight in 1947 recorded a speed of 1,200 km per hour.
- The U.N. in 1948 formed the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to look after problems of environment and ecology.

- The first drive-in theatre opened in New Jersey, USA. (1933)
- Moscow metro (first underground railway) began service. (1935)
- The first passenger helicopter was flown in Germany. (1936)

Independence, at last !

The INA soldiers were halted in their march to New Delhi by the British army. When Netaji knew that the British army was advancing through Burma, he left Rangoon and went to Bangkok, where he was informed about the surrender of Germany. He then proceeded to Malaya where he was told that Japan, too, had surrendered. He then went back to Singapore where he conferred with his ministers. They advised him to go underground and later come back to lead the liberation army. On his way to Russia-held Manchuria where he had been promised help by Japan, his plane met with an accident in Taipei on August 22, 1945. He was reported to have met with his end, though the news has remained shrouded in mystery to this day.

In the elections to the Central Legislative Council in 1946, the Congress won 56 seats and the Muslim League 30. In the Provincial Councils, the Congress won 923 seats, while the League got 425 seats. In Bengal the League formed the ministry; a coalition ministry was formed in Punjab, while the other states had Congress ministries. In Sind, though the League had a majority, those elected later joined the Congress.

A 3-member Cabinet mission came from England to hold consultations with the Indian leaders. They suggested formation of an Indian Union with no separate provinces for Muslims. Three provincial groups were to be formed and their representatives would be members of the committee to draft a constitution. The draft would be acceptable to the British government.

The formation of an interim government was announced in June. Jinnah did not agree to the composition of Hindus and Muslims. Nehru was requested to constitute a cabinet. The ministry took the oath of office on September 2. The Muslims observed the day as a day of mourning. However, on October 13, the League announced its readiness to join the cabinet, saying it was only the first step towards the establishment of Pakistan.

A section of the Muslims were not happy with the situation. As a result, communal riots broke out in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal.



Jawaharlal
Nehru

The Hindus retaliated. Noakhali, with a predominant Muslim population, witnessed a carnage of Hindus. Gandhiji rushed to that place with a message of peace. He walked 120 miles through 17 villages pleading for Hindu-Muslim amity.



Rajendra Prasad

On December 11, 1946 Babu Rajendra Prasad was elected President of the Constituent Assembly.

On June 2, 1947 the Viceroy, Lord Mount-batten, met the leaders of the three major parties—Congress, Muslim League, and the Sikhs, and gave the final shape to the transfer of power. The next day, he made the famous June 3 broadcast, of the government's decision to partition the country into the Indian Union and Pakistan, granting them dominion status and freedom to remain within the British Commonwealth. The government also gave freedom to the princely states to merge with either of the two nations. On July 16, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Bill. It was decided to transfer power on August 15.

Some of India's “Firsts”

- India's first children's home was started by the Women's Indian Association in Madras (now Chennai) in 1923.
- India's first bicycle factory was established in Calcutta. (1938)
- India's first (second in the world) blood bank was started by U.N. Brahmachari. (1939)
- *Chandamama*, soon to become the most popular children's magazine and to come out in 12 different languages, was launched in Telugu. (1947)
- The first postage stamp issued by independent India carrying the picture of the National Flag with its value 3-1/2 annas (approximately 20 paise) was issued in 1947.
- C.Rajagopalachari took over as the first and only Indian Governor-General. (1948)
- India got its first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Army in General K.M. Cariappa. (1949)

A sovereign republic comes into being

Pakistan was born on August 14, with Jinnah as the Governor-General and Liaquat Ali Khan as Prime Minister. In Delhi, at the stroke of midnight, Jawaharlal Nehru made the historic 'tryst with destiny' speech.



Jawaharlal
Nehru

Lord Mountbatten was made Governor-General and Nehru became free India's first Prime Minister.

On September 4, communal riots broke out in Delhi, and Gandhiji rushed back from Noakhali. The riots triggered off an exodus of Muslims to and Hindus from Pakistan fearing retaliatory trouble.

Though peace was established in Delhi, trouble broke out once

again in January 1948. Gandhiji went on a fast which he ended five days later on January 18 after he got assurances from both Hindu and Muslim leaders that they would maintain amity. Unfortunately, his end came at the hands of Nathuram Godse on January 30.



Gandhiji

On November 6, 1949, the Constituent Assembly completed its work; it approved the draft constitution. On January 26, 1950, the Constitution came into force and India was officially declared a sovereign, democratic republic, based on the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

There was trouble in the princely state of Kashmir, where the population was Muslim dominated while the ruler was a Hindu. There was resistance to Kashmir joining the Indian Union, but the ruler signed the accession order. Pathan mercenaries from Pakistan made incursions into Kashmir. This resulted in the first Indo-Pakistan War. On January 1, 1948, India and Pakistan agreed to stop the war in Kashmir and hold a referendum to decide its future.

(Next month : India's march towards progress, 1951-2000)

Visitors From The Forest

When mist fills the Himalayan valleys, and heavy monsoon rain sweeps across the hills, it is natural for wild creatures to seek shelter. Sometimes my cottage in the forest is the most convenient refuge.

There is no doubt I make things easier for all concerned by leaving most of my windows open. I like plenty of fresh air indoors and if a few birds, beasts, and insects come in too, they are welcome, provided they do not make too much of a nuisance of themselves.

I must confess I did lose patience with a bamboo beetle who blundered in the other night and fell into the water jug. I rescued him and pushed him out of the window. A few seconds later he came whirring in again, and with unerring accuracy landed with a plop in the same jug. I fished him out once again and offered him the freedom of the night. But attracted no doubt by the light and warmth of my small sitting-room, he came buzzing back, circling the room like a helicopter looking for a place to land. Quickly I covered the water jug. He landed in a bowl of wild dahlias, and I allowed him to remain

there, comfortably curled up in the hollow of a flower.

Sometimes during the day a bird visits me... a deep blue whistling thrush,



hopping about on long dainty legs, too nervous to sing. She perches on the window-sill, looking out at the rain. She does not permit any familiarity. But if I sit quietly in my chair, she will also sit quietly on her window-sill, glancing quickly at me now and then to make sure I'm keeping my distance. When the rain stops, she bursts into a full-throated

song, her broken but haunting melody echoing down the ravine.

A squirrel comes sometimes, when his home in the oak tree gets waterlogged. Apparently he is a bachelor; anyway he lives alone. He knows me well, this squirrel, and is bold enough to climb on to the dining-table looking for tit-bits which he always finds because I leave them there deliberately. Had I met him when he was a youngster, he would have learnt to eat from my hand; but I have been here only a few months. I like it this way. I am not looking for pets; these are simply guests.

Last week, as I was sitting down at my desk to write a long-deferred article, I was startled to see an emerald-green praying mantis sitting on my writing-pad. He peered up at me with his protuberant glass-bead eyes, and I stared down at him through my glasses. When I gave him a prod, he moved off in a leisurely way. Later I found him examining the binding of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*; perhaps he had found a succulent bookworm. He disappeared for a couple of days, and then I found him on my dressing-table, preening himself before the mirror.

Out in the garden, I spotted another mantis, perched on the jasmine bush.

Its arms were raised like those of a boxer. 'Perhaps they are a pair,' I thought, and went indoors, fetched my mantis and placed him on the jasmine bush opposite his fellow insect. He did not like what he saw..no comparison with his own image!—and made off in a hurry.

My most interesting visitor comes at night, when the lights are still



burning— a tiny bat, who prefers to fly in through the open door, and will use the window only if there is no alternative. His object is to snap up the moths that cluster around the lamps.

All the bats I have seen fly fairly high, keeping near to the ceiling; but this particular bat flies in low like a dive-bomber, zooming in and out of chair legs and under tables. Once he passed straight between my legs. Has his radar gone wrong, I wondered, or is he just plain mad?

I went to my shelves of Natural History and looked up Bats, but could find no explanation for this erratic behaviour. As a last resort, I turned to an ancient volume, Sternadale's *Indian Mammalia* (Calcutta, 1884), and in it, to my delight, found what I was looking

for: "A bat found near Mussorie by Captain Jutton, on the southern range of hills at 1,800 metres; head and body about three centimetres; skims close to the ground, instead of flying high as bats generally do. Habitat, Jharipani, north-west Himalayas". Apparently the bat was rare even in 1884.

Perhaps I have come across one of the few surviving members of the species. Jharipani is only 3 km from where I live. I am happy that this bat survives in my small corner of the woods, and I undertake to celebrate it in prose and verse. Once I found it suspended upside down from the railing at the foot of my bed. I decided to leave it there. For a writer alone in the woods, even an eccentric bat is welcome company.

Answers to last month's quiz

1. January 26, 1952.
2. The President of India.
3. The Union Minister of Defence.
4. From Vijay Chowk to the Red Fort.
5. At Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate where the Prime Minister lays a wreath at the Martyrs Memorial.
6. Investiture, when the President of India honours recipients of Vir Chakra and Ashok Chakra for acts of gallantry and supreme sacrifice.
7. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo.
8. By presenting floats depicting progress in different fields or cultural heritage of the respective regions.
9. The children who have won the Bravery Awards. They are taken on caparisoned elephants.
10. The fly-past if the weather permits.
11. The Beating Retreat ceremony held in Vijay Chowk on January 29 evening to commemorate Martyrs Day on January 30.
12. The 44th session of the Indian National Congress held at Lahore on December 31, 1929 had decided to observe January 26, 1930 as Independence Day. Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the session.



IN SEARCH OF A BRIDE

Viswanath was a wealthy landlord of Vikaspuri. He was quite anxious that he found a suitable bride for his son Damodar who was now of marriageable age. The boy was quite handsome and well educated. Being the only child, he could be expected to inherit all of his father's wealth. He was thus a most eligible bachelor. His father had no doubt that the bride should be beautiful and accomplished. In his search for suitable girls, Viswanath was somehow unable to choose someone to his liking. They would either be beautiful but not well versed; or they would be educated but were lacking in looks.

One day, as he sat wondering

where he could continue his search, his friend Ramnath called in. "What's worrying you, my friend?" he asked of Viswanath, who then told him how his search for a bride for his son had led him nowhere.

"Whether it is a bride or a boy, in the case of marriages one should give more weight to character and behaviour than to looks or education," opined Ramnath. "If you agree with my views, I would suggest that you go to Udayapur where my friend Harihar has a daughter called Hemlata. From what I know of her, she is well behaved, she has good features though she may not be a beauty, and

she has had good education. I would advise you to go and take a look at her. I'm sure you will find in her all the attributes you wish for in a daughter-in-law."

Viswanath took Harihar's address from Ramnath, and after a couple of days, he started for Udayapur. He enquired with several people and somehow reached Harihar's house. As it had rained the previous night, the pathway to the portico was full of slush and mud. He could not avoid stepping on the slush, but managed to go up to the steps.

He saw a young girl at the por-

tico. "Please bring me some water to wash my feet. I could not help stepping on the slush," he said.

"Of course, I shall bring water, but first tell me, have you really come in search of this house?" asked the girl, politely.

"I wish to meet Harihar; isn't this his house?" queried Viswanath.

"Yes, this is his house," said the girl. "Please wait here; let me go and get water for you to wash your feet."

She then went inside and brought water in a mug and handed it to Viswanath. "My father is in; he'll meet you presently."



Viswanath washed his feet and hands and wiped them with the towel handed to him by the girl. "Do tell me, why didn't you bring me water when I first asked for it? Instead, you wanted to know whether I was actually searching for this house. It is rather strange and I'm curious to know why," he asked of her.

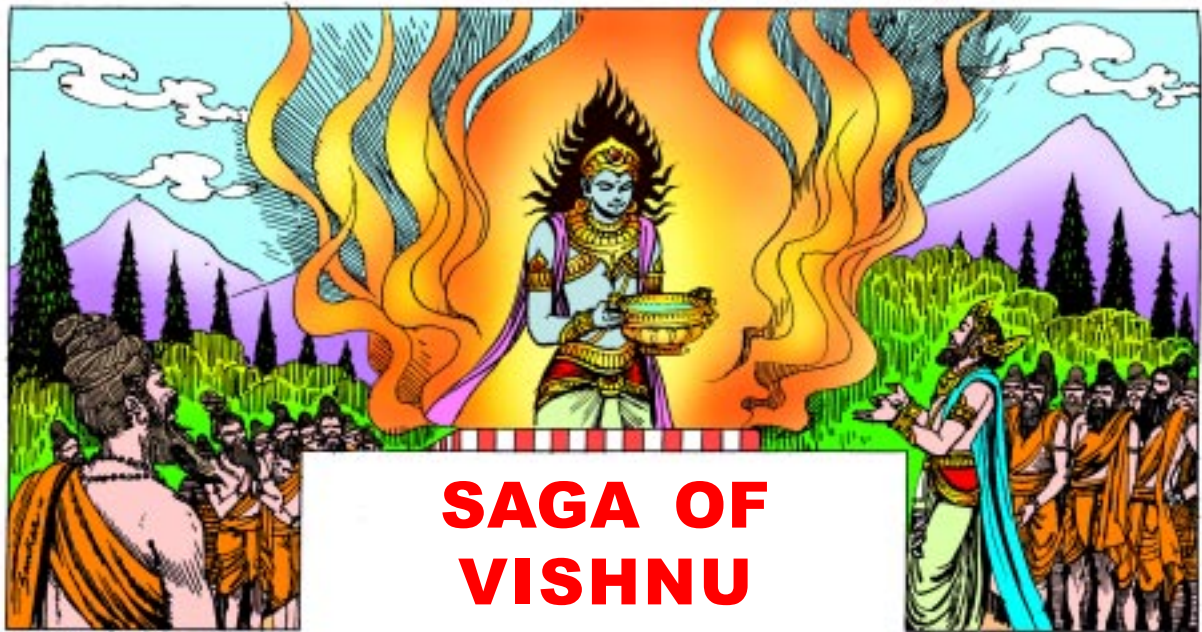
"What can be so strange about my query?" remarked the girl. "I haven't seen you before, and you're a stranger to this place. Suppose this is not the house you were searching for, and then you would be going back your way through the slush and mud. In that case, there was no point in your

washing your feet here; the water would just have gone waste. That's why I wanted to confirm that you've come to see my father before I went and brought water for you."

Viswanath could easily guess that the girl had a lot of commonsense and would weigh all pros and cons before she came to a decision. That was a good trait, especially in girls. He decided then and there that she would make an ideal wife for Damodar. He now wanted only a nod from Harihar to fix the marriage of his son.

He followed her to where Harihar was waiting for him.





SAGA OF VISHNU

9. RAMAVATAR

King Dasaratha of Ayodhya performed a *yagna*, praying for a son. It went off very smoothly. At the end of the yagna, Agni the god of Fire emerged from the holy fire with a bowl of *kheer* and gave it to the king. Dasaratha gave the milk pudding to his queens, Kausalya and Kaikeyi. Each of them, in turn, gave a portion to Sumitra, the third queen.

Soon after, on the ninth day of the bright part of the month of Chaitra, Lord Vishnu was reborn to Queen Kausalya in the form of a glowing cloud-coloured boy. On the same day Kaikeyi gave birth to Bharata who was the incarnation of Vishnu's conch. Lakshmana and Shatrughna were born to Sumitra. The golden coloured

Lakshmana was the incarnation of Sheshnaga, on which Vishnu reclines in Vaikunta, while the Lord's mace and the weapon Sudarshana chakra took the form of Shatrughna. Thus all of Lord Vishnu's attributes were born as Dasaratha's sons.

It was Rama's third birthday. The whole city of Ayodhya and the kingdom of Kosala celebrated the birthday joyfully. Dasaratha held a grand feast at which everyone who was anyone in Ayodhya came.

Queen Kausalya carried Rama around the room. As they stood near a window, Rama spotted the beautiful moon in the sky. At once he cried for it. No toy or a sweet dish or fruit could take his mind off the moon. He wanted



the moon and nothing else!

Then Sumantra, the king's companion, asked for a mirror. He held it so that Rama could see the reflection of the moon in it. Rama saw the moon and himself in the mirror. He clapped his tiny hands and said "Rama-Chandra". That is how he came to be called Ramachandra.

Then Bhadra picked up the baby and showed him the mirror. This time Rama could see himself and Bhadra and said "Rama-Bhadra." So he is also called Ramabhadra.

The four princes grew up to be smart. Lakshmana followed Rama around like a shadow and was with him all the time. Bharata and Shatrughna were also never far behind. The broth-

ers were so close to each other they sometimes appeared like one being.

Brahmarishi Vasishtha was their tutor and the princes learnt the Vedas and the sciences and arts from him. Rama was quick to master all his lessons. Vasishtha was particular to impress upon him the history of his illustrious dynasty, as having descended from the Sun. "You're the crown jewel in the family of the dyansty of Ikshvaku," said Vasishtha.

The Rishis and munis listening to sage Suta, in Naimisharanya, recounting the story of Vishnu, wanted to know more about Rama's ancestors. The sage started with the origin of the Ikshvaku dynasty.

At the beginning of the *mahakalpa*, the resplendent Surya was revealed and Vaivasvat Manu was born of him. Vaivasvat had ten sons, and one of them was Ikshvaku. All of them became great monarchs well known for their wisdom and valour. They ruled over different parts of the world for many, many years. Great kings like Dilip and Raghu were born into the dyansty founded by Ikshvaku.

Once King Dilip asked the guru of his clan, Vasishtha, what he should do to be blessed with a son. Vasishtha asked him to pray sincerely to the holy Nandini, a descendant of the heavenly

Kamadhenu. Dilip did so with great reverence and devotion. One day, he took Nandini to graze in the forest. She wandered off into a cave. There a lion caught hold of her. The king fixed an arrow to his bow and got ready to shoot the lion but his fingers would not obey him. The lion said: “O King, this cow is my food, and I’m doing no wrong by killing it. That’s why your fingers were stayed.”

At once Dilip said: “Eat me instead of Nandini.” As soon as the king uttered these words, the lion vanished. Nandini pleased with Dilip’s devotion, said: “O King! I created the lion and the scene by *maya* or illusion to see how devoted you are to me. I’m very pleased with you and bless you with a son.”

Raghu was then born to King Dilip. He was known for his generous and charitable nature. He would give anything away to whoever asked for it. Once he gave away all his wealth and kept nothing for himself. When he had nothing to give away, Raghu went to Kubera to ask for more wealth. The yakshas tried to prevent him from entering Kubera’s city, Alakapuri, but failed. Kubera welcomed Raghu and gave him all the wealth he asked for. Raghu distributed it among the needy.

Aja was Raghu’s son. He was a

brave and valorous man. Bhojaraja’s beautiful daughter Indumati chose him as her husband at a *Swayamvara*. As he was setting out with Indumati, the other suitors attacked them, but Aja was successful in fighting them all. He then took Indumati to his palace and made her his queen.

One day, the two were strolling in the royal garden as sage Narada was coming along the heavenly way. Suddenly the divine garland of flowers wrapped around his veena flew off and fell on Indumati’s neck. She died immediately. Aja was inconsolable, but Narada went up to him and told him that Indumati was actually the apsara Harini sent by Indra to disturb the rishi Thrinabindu, and the sage had cursed



her to be born on earth. When Harini pleaded with him, he told her how to escape the curse. The divine garland reminded her of her heavenly origin and she left her mortal body and went back to heaven.

Aja's son was Dasaratha. He was a great marksman and helped the Devas in their fight against the asuras. Once he went to help Indra against Shabhrasura. Queen Kaikeyi had gone with Dasaratha. In the battlefield, the wheel of Dasaratha's chariot was about to come off the axle. Kaikeyi steadied it with her finger and prevented an accident. The king was very pleased with her presence of mind and courage and offered her two boons. Kaikeyi said she did not want anything just then but

would remind him whenever she wished for something.

Dasaratha's skill as a marksman was his ability to hit a target by his sense of hearing. He could aim at the sound even if he could not see the object and still hit it. Once he was going after an elephant that had run wild and was destroying the crops of his subjects. At nightfall he was still looking for his prey when he heard the sound of splashing and gurgling. The king assumed that it might be the elephant drinking water and strung an arrow towards the place from where he heard the sound. To his dismay, he heard a cry. The king had not really expected any human being to be wandering around the forest at night. When he rushed to the spot, he found that his arrow had pierced the heart of a young man. He was Shravan Kumar. He lived in the forest with his old parents who were blind and could not walk. He was their only support. Before he breathed his last, he asked the king to take the water that he had come to fetch for his parents as they were thirsty and then tell them about the accident that had befallen him.

The king, now full of remorse, went to Shravan Kumar's parents, made them drink the water, and then gently told them about the accident. They were inconsolable in their grief and

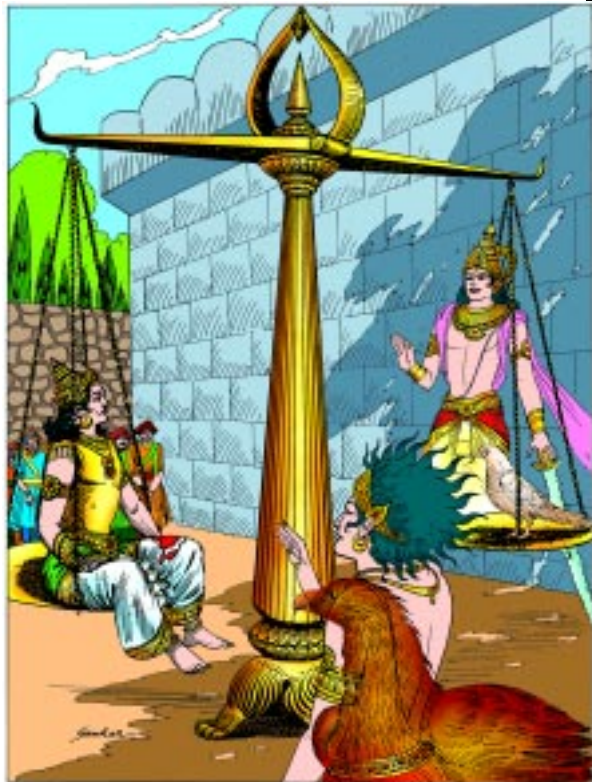


cursed the king: “O King! You’ll also die of a similar grief that is killing us. You’ll die longing for your son!” The couple then gave up their lives right there.

Among the kings of the Surya dynasty, Shibi was another well-known and noble king. He never refused to welcome and protect someone who went to him for refuge. Once Indra, the lord of the Heavens and Agni, the lord of Fire decided to test the altruistic king. Indra took the form of a dove and Agni that of an eagle. The eagle came chasing the dove into Shibi’s court and the dove fell at the king’s feet seeking refuge.

Taking the dove into his protective hands, Shibi addressed the eagle: “The dove has come to me for help and I can’t deny it. At the same time, the dove is rightfully your prey and food, and I would not like to deny you that either. So, please accept flesh from my thigh equal to the weight of the dove and satisfy your hunger.”

The eagle agreed and a balance was brought in and the dove was placed on one pan. Then Shibi cut off a piece of flesh from his thigh and placed it on the other pan. It weighed much less than the dove. So the king cut off some more flesh and added it to the pan. Still it did not equal the weight of the dove. Shibi



continued to add pieces of his flesh to the pan, yet the dove seemed heavier. Finally, Shibi himself sat on the pan and asked the eagle to accept him instead of the dove.

Pleased with King Shibi’s readiness to sacrifice and his charity, Indra and Agni revealed themselves and blessed him with good fortune and prosperity.

Viswamitra was born a Kshatriya and was a great king of the Surya dynasty. By tremendous meditation and study he became a Brahmarishi. Ambiraj, a great devotee of Vishnu and a famous Rajarishi, was also a king belonging to his dyansty. Goddess Lakshmi was born as his daughter

Shrimati. Even while very young, she had chosen Vishnu as her husband and worshipped him every day. She was so lovely and graceful that the fame of her beauty spread all over the three worlds.

Narada was very proud of the fact that he would never be tempted with anything. He was proud that he had no desire for wealth, women, or anything else and would not be carried away by the charms of women, in particular. Once while he was visiting the three worlds with another rishi called Parvat, he boasted this trait of his. They called on Ambiraj. The king welcomed them with great reverence and looked after them most hospitably.

The king asked his daughter Shrimati to seek the blessings of the two Devarishis. The moment the two

sages set their eyes on Shrimati, they were smitten with love. Both wanted to marry her and started fighting about who was the more deserving of her hand. Ambiraj was surprised and alarmed at the sages' reaction. Shrimati then suggested that her father announce a Swayamvara for her. As soon as they heard of the Swayamvara the two Rishis left the place.

Narada, however, was unable to take Shrimati out of his mind and when he reached Vaikunta, he requested Vishnu to give him his beauty so that he could win Shrimati's hand at her Swayamvara. Rishi Parvat, on the other hand, was consumed by jealousy and requested Vishnu to give Narada the form of a monkey. Vishnu did as Parvat had requested.

(To continue)



THE SPECTRE OF THE MOONLIT NIGHT

The old mansion stood bathed in moonlight. Its most luxurious room was occupied by no less a person than the famous Lord Dufferin. He was enjoying a welcome break in a friend's house in Ireland. He had an illustrious career behind him. He had held many important positions and was about to become the Viceroy of India (1884-1888).

It was quiet and still. The eminent guest slept soundly. But as the clock struck twelve, he found himself wide awake. He felt something queer and eerie in the atmosphere. The ghostly moonlight streamed into the room through the glass on the windows. Strange sounds came from the well-trimmed lawns outside, shaded by majestic trees casting long dark shadows. A bird fluttered all of a sudden, an owl hooted, and there was a rustling sound as if somebody was walking on dry leaves. Then, a heavy panting and a long low moan filled the air. Awe-struck and with his heart racing, Lord Dufferin went closer to the

window and peered out. As he looked on, slowly a mysterious figure emerged out of the dark shadows into the full light of the moon. It was a man bent low and staggering under an enormous load on

his back. He was carrying a big black coffin. Was he stealing an old relic of his host's family?

Lord Dufferin was no coward. He threw open the windows, jumped out onto the dewy grass and pursued the stranger. "Stop! You fellow! What are you up to?" he challenged.

On being confronted, the man lifted his head, which was till then hidden under his burden. Lord Dufferin at once recoiled. He was startled and went pale. For, he saw staring at him an ugly, loathsome and repulsive face. Then taking courage, he advanced once again. But, believe it or not, the stranger along with his load dissolved clean into the moonlight before his very eyes. With his disappearance, the gloom was gone and everything became quiet and restful as before.

Bewildered and shaken, Lord





Dufferin returned to his room. But he did not go back to sleep. He put down in his diary the bizarre incident of the night in every minute detail.

The next morning he questioned his host. It was confirmed that there had not been any recent burial in the hamlet. Nor was there a local ghost on rampant. The description of the strange man matched no one in the neighbourhood. The event remained a puzzling enigma.

A decade passed by. Lord Dufferin had forgotten all about his frightful experience in Ireland that moonlit night. In 1893 he was Britain's ambassador to France. He was invited to a

diplomatic reception on the topmost floor of the famous Grand Hotel in Paris. He reached the venue on time, accompanied by his secretary. Both proceeded to the elevator. Other dignitaries waiting before him respectfully made way for the important guest. Lord Dufferin graciously acknowledged their courtesy.

The elevator arrived and its door squealed open. Lord Dufferin was about to step in when he suddenly recoiled holding back his secretary. Perhaps no

one noticed the surprise and horror on his face. But the British envoy had a good presence of mind. In a moment he smiled again and offering some apologies requested the others not to wait for him. It seemed he had forgotten to enquire something at the reception counter. The other officials entered the lift, the door closed, and it began its slow climb.

What happened? Why was Lord Dufferin terrified? The very sight of the lift attendant at once brought back to his memory the hideous-looking man of that eerie Irish night. A premonition stopped him from entering the elevator

of which that very man seemed to be in control. For, in every feature and appearance the man operating the lift was an exact double of that ghostly coffin-carrier he had encountered years ago. He had that same ghoulish and malicious face and an unforgettable squat figure.

Lord Dufferin went straight to the hotel manager. He was asking him about the identity of the man operating the lift and where he came from. But before he could get an answer, there was a fearful and ear-splitting crashing sound. As the lift was nearing its destination on the fifth floor, its cables snapped and the cabin came plunging down the shaft. All the passengers, including the mysterious attendant, met with instant death.

The sad mishap created a great sensation in the Europe of those days.

The front pages of the major news-papers of the world carried the story of the accident. But Lord Dufferin was silent and thoughtful. For him the incident had a different meaning. However hard he tried, he failed to find the identity of the strange lift operator. The hotel did not have any records of him, as he was just a casual worker employed for the day.

No one even came to claim his body. Where did he come from? The mystery remained unexplained.

Who was the loathsome man staggering with the coffin? How and why did he disappear into thin air? How come that strange fellow, with the same malicious grin, was seen years later operating the lift at the Grand Hotel in Paris? Did the coffin symbolize the lift? Was the mysterious man an agent of death?

But, Lord Dufferin strongly believed that the frightful apparition of that desolate moonlit night had indeed saved his life!





WHO WILL BE A BETTER RULER?

The King of Kalinga had two sons, Veerasimha and Rajasimha. Both of them grew up just as their father had wanted. But he was in a dilemma? To whom should he hand over the reins of the kingdom?

One day, he sent for them. “My sons, it’s time you both got ready to take over the reins from me, but I’m not able to decide to whom I should hand over power. So, I have decided to give you two years’ time to go out into the world and come back stronger and more handsome. But, remember, you should not reveal your identity.”

The princes agreed to abide by the king’s direction and set out from the palace the very next day, wearing ordinary clothes and unaccompanied by attendants. Veerasimha had heard of the famous wrestler Balasena, so he straight

away went to him and requested him to take him as a trainee to become strong. Balasena agreed. As Veerasimha did not reveal his identity, he was treated like any other trainee and was not given any special privileges. The training was not anything easy, and Veerasimha had really to strain hard to acquire strength. However, constant physical exercises helped his body acquire a glow.

Meanwhile, Rajasimha went over to a village far away from the capital. After a few days stay there, he found that the crops were withering away because there was no proper irrigation, the village had no proper roads, and the people were facing a threat of famine.

As he had dressed himself like a common man, Rajasimha could manage to stay with some of the villagers, who poured out their woes to him. He was

very upset. He went to the village chief and discussed with him how the situation could be improved. "I feel if the villagers make joint efforts, the village can be saved from misery."

The village chief, with a scorn, said: "Nothing can improve matters, young man; you're only wasting your time offering advice to us. You would better mind your own business."

Rajasimha was shocked by the way the village chief reacted. He decided to go against his father's instructions. He revealed his identity. When the village chief realized that he was speaking with none other than the prince of the land, he changed his attitude. He immediately called a meeting of the villagers and introduced the prince to them and said Rajasimha would help them improve their affairs.

The prince then addressed the vil-

lagers and gave them some suggestions. As they listened to him in rapt attention, an aged villager got up and said, "O Prince! This village has been under the spell of a curse for a long time. That's why we are all suffering."

"Please take it as if the curse has been lifted," said Rajasimha reassuringly, "and from now on, let us start afresh to bring prosperity to this village. I shall give you all guidance and each one of you should abide by my orders."

Most of those assembled in the village square felt enthused, and promised to work as the prince directed. Others were afraid of punishment if they did not cooperate, so they, too, agreed to follow his instructions.

Work started in right earnest. They gave priority to water conservation and proper irrigation methods to trap all water going waste. Several wells were



dug, besides constructing a dam. The crops about to wither away now got new life and the harvest was better than expected. Next, they undertook afforestation and the newly planted trees grew fast and sturdy. New roads were laid which facilitated the villagers to go to the nearest towns and markets. All the activities were supervised by Rajasimha.

At the end of two years, the prince took leave of the villagers and went back to the capital. At the palace, he found that Veerasimha had already returned.

The king sent for them and took a good look at them. Veerasimha was, of course, looking very handsome, sturdy and strong. Rajasimha was equally strong and sturdy, but he seemed to have acquired a dark tan by exposing himself to sunshine for long hours and continuously for several days.

The two princes narrated to the king how they spent the two years. Veerasimha

did not have much to say, except about his body-building exercises and physical and martial feats. "Father, look at Rajasimha. Does he come anywhere near me in handsomeness?" said Veerasimha. "You should make *me* your successor."

The king laughed aloud. "The duty of a ruler is to strive for the well-being of his subjects, instead of doing everything for his own comfort or pleasure. I quite agree, a king has to be strong and sturdy; you both are strong and look sturdy, but that does not make you, Veerasimha, an ideal ruler. On the contrary, Rajasimha has learnt what is meant by people's welfare. He did not think about himself all through the two years. He aimed at the upliftment of the villagers. So, I feel he'll make a better ruler than you. However, you be the commander of the army, and help Rajasimha by ensuring that peace prevails in Kalinga."





Reader Sukhbir Singh has sent this by e-mail from Malaysia:

I enjoy *Chandamama* because it has a lot of nice stories which are based on India's heritage.

A PICK FROM OUR MAIL BAG

By e-mail from Kailash Sharma :

I am a regular reader of *Chandamama* for the last 20 years. In fact, it was the first magazine I started reading with in my primary school education. *Chandamama* has given me an edge over all others in every step of life. And I think this magazine is serving the nation and the com-

munity in the best way. I have a suggestion: *Chandamama* can prepare special issues on mythological subjects, like complete *Ramayana* and complete *Mahabharata*. I think they will be an instant success and worth purchasing for readers like me.

Also by e-mail from Shweta Prasanna of Mumbai:

I like *Chandamama* very much. I like the mythological stories, Samaritan Samir, GK, Unsolved Mysteries, and the Vetala stories. My parents tell me that these stories used to appear during their childhood.

Reader Anitha M.N. writes from Bangalore:

The Creative Contest helps me to improve my knowledge and skill. It is a very nice contest for students.

This came from reader S. Dash of Bhubaneswar:

My heartiest congratulations for the 'new look' *Chandamama*. It certainly is quite appealing; even my mother, who is an avid fan of the magazine, approves of this make-over. *Chandamama* is still one of the best reads. I had strayed away from it for some time, but now find it even more enchanting and magical—it brings back memories of my mother reading me stories from it.

It can also be the last word!

What is meant by a 'Parthian shot'? asks reader Jyotiranjana Biswal of Durgapur.

After a prolonged discussion among a few people or a heated dialogue between two persons, if one of them were to make a sharp, telling remark before conclusion, it is called a Parthian shot. The Parthian cavalry was famous for its archers who could turn round in their saddle and shoot arrows at the enemy pursuing them, while in real flight or a feigned one. In other words, a rearward shot by a fleeing mounted archer.

Reader Simanta Gandhi of Talcher is intrigued by the idiom "to spare somebody's blushes".

When does one blush? When he or she suddenly experiences a strong emotion, feels ashamed, or is embarrassed. When someone avoids saying or doing things which might shame or embarrass another, he or she is only sparing someone's blushes.

Reader Madhava Menon of Shoranur was attending a colleague's wedding. The ceremony went off well. There was a good crowd, too. Later, in the dining hall, he and his friend Narayanan Nambiar found the lunch not so a smooth affair. There was a long wait. After rice was served, the curry took a long time to come. There was no sight of papad and ghee for sometime. Nambiar remarked: the food is coming in dribs and drabs. He said it all, but Madhava Menon wondered what he meant by that expression.

It only means, the food items came in small quantities and at irregular intervals. This is an informal expression.

Who is a jerry-builder? asks Meera Shanker of Vijayawada.

One who builds houses cheaply and hastily, using mostly sub-standard material, is generally described as a jerry-builder.

Sreedevi Kamath of Mangalore wants to know the meaning of the idiom "cock of the walk".

One who behaves as if he is superior to others in his group is called the cock of the walk. If the leader of a group or a team goes about or speaks in a conceited or domineering manner, he is verily a cock of the walk!



❁ **What is the origin of the word ROBOT?**

Jyotiranjana Biswal, Durgapur

The word means, a machine resembling a human being doing routine, mechanical tasks on command from another machine, like a computer. It can also be a mechanical device which operates automatically with human-like skill. The word was first used in a play called *R.U.R.* by the Czechoslovak dramatist, Karel Capek. *Robotnik*, in Czech language, means a serf or a slave, and *Robota*, compulsory labour. Computer-controlled mechanical “arms” are used even in complicated surgeries.

❁ **What is the full name of the detective-story writer Agatha Christie?**

Vimala Jogelkar, Pune

She was born Agatha Mary Miller. After marriage, she was known as Agatha Mary Clarissa Mallovan, and when she started writing her novels, she took the pen name Agatha Christie.

❁ **What is Rubik’s Cube?**

Muhammad Ibrahim, Ahmednagar

The Hungarian architect, Erno Rubik, invented what came to be called the Rubik’s Cube. It is a multi-coloured puzzle which can be manipulated and re-arranged some 43,000,000,000,000 ways and only one is correct! Rubik invented it to make his students understand 3-dimensional designs. It soon became a craze the world over.

❁ **Who was Nicolo Conte?**

Kumudini Srikumar, Kodaikanal

He was an 18th century French chemist who invented the crayon made from graphite and clay in black, red, and brown colours.

❁ **How is Triptolemus connected with agriculture?**

Srinivasa Reddy, Secunderabad

In Greek mythology, he was the inventor of the plow (plough), an agricultural implement used for cutting, lifting and turning over sod. He is generally considered the patron of agriculture.

Creative Contest

Given below is the beginning of a story; it has all the ingredients of turning out to be an interesting tale. But that 'creation' is in YOUR hands! You have to imagine the sequences — possible and probable — and give a finish to the story. Not only finish it, but think up a catchy title (heading), too. Remember, you have to do this exercise in 200 to 250 words. The best entry will get an attractive prize, and the entry will also be published in the magazine. The contest is meant for our young readers. Please remember to mention your name, age, class, name of school, and home address with PIN Code. Prove that YOU can write better than grown-ups; so, don't take their help!

Here goes the story:

King Suryadev was to appoint a new minister. Among his courtiers was one Mantramurti, who had earned much respect from the king. He thought the courtier would be loyal and helpful to him. He happened to mention his choice to Queen Mayavati, whose cousin, Viswabandhu, was also a courtier.

"I don't think Viswabandhu is in any way less qualified for the post than Mantramurti," remarked the queen. "Why don't you appoint him your minister?" Mayavati posed the question to Suryadev.

"Of course, I did not say he is less efficient or anything like that," said the king defensively. "But we must test him when an opportunity comes."

Veerabahu was a prosperous merchant in the kingdom. He had a beautiful daughter. Word about her charm had spread and three suitors approached

Veerabahu with proposals of marriage. He found himself in a dilemma, as he was unable to make a choice. He sent the three young men to his guru, Atmanand.

The hermit took a good look at them and sat in meditation for a while. When he opened his eyes, he went inside and brought a shell full of earth, another of water, and a third shell full of grain, and gave each to the three young men and asked them to go back to Veerabahu.

The merchant was only bewildered. He had no doubt his guru had indicated his choice, but somehow he failed to fathom his guru's mind. He led the young men to the king.

Suryadev thought, here was an opportunity to test Mantramurti and Viswabandhu. He sent for them and posed to them the problem faced by Veerabahu.

How do you think the two courtiers approached the problem? Were they able to satisfy Veerabahu? Was the king able to make up his mind? Write out your entry (Ah! It must sound convincing!), add a title (must), write 'Creative Contest-February 2001' on top of the paper, and mail it to reach us before February 20.

Regretfully, no entry for the September and October 2000 Contests was found suitable for publication. So, no prize is being offered.

—**Editor**

Know Your India

QUIZ

Elsewhere in this issue you will read about Sarojini Naidu, a great poetess whom Gandhiji had called 'The Nightingale of India'. How familiar are you with other famous women of our country?

1. Before it became India's capital, Delhi once had a woman ruler. Who was she? How long did she rule?
2. A foreigner woman, who settled down in India, was the recipient of both the Bharat Ratna and the Nobel Prize. Who was she?
3. India minted a coin to honour a woman. Who was she?
4. Who was the woman member in the first ministry formed by Jawaharlal Nehru?
5. Who was the woman member of the Azad Hind government headed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose?
6. Who was the first woman President of the Indian National Congress?
7. An actress was nominated to the Rajya Sabha for the first time. Who was she?
8. A famous vocalist of south India enacted the lead role in the Hindi devotional movie "*Bhakta Meera*". Name her.
9. Which Indian woman author won the Booker Prize for her very first novel?
10. Which woman writer first received the Jnanpith Award?
11. Which woman artist became the first Indian and also Asian member of the Grand Salon of Paris?
12. Which singer of India got an entry in the Guinness Book of Records? What was her achievement?

(Answers next month)



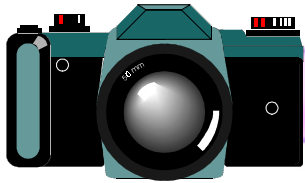


PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other?
You may write it on a competition post card and mail it to:

Photo Caption Contest, CHANDAMAMA
(at the address given below)



to reach us before the 25th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.



The Prize for the December 2000
contest goes to :

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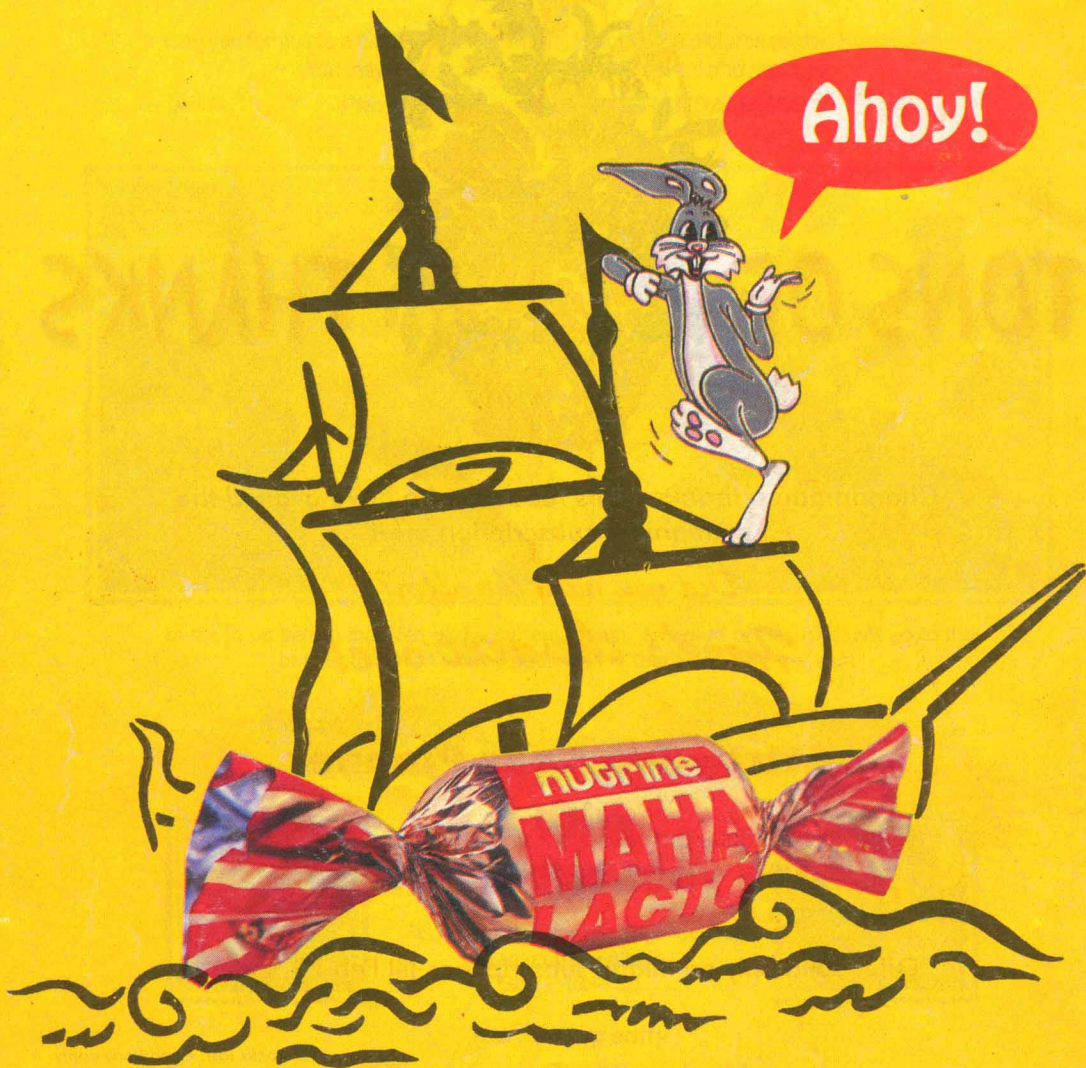


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